



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 



AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Together with the Alabama Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Alabama State Service Commission), the Corporation is working to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America.

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***Tell Your AmeriCorps Story
to the World***



Introduction:

Every day across the nation AmeriCorps members are making a powerful impact on the most critical issues facing our nation. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for more than 80,000 Americans to give back in an intensive way to their communities and country each year. It consists of three main programs: AmeriCorps State and National, whose members serve with national and local nonprofit and community groups; AmeriCorps VISTA, through which members serve full time fighting poverty; and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps), a team-based residential program for young adults 18-24.

AmeriCorps members recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit groups to become self-sustaining, among many other activities.

AmeriCorps Week is an opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners and friends to demonstrate AmeriCorps' impact on critical issues, bring more Americans into service, and thank the community partners who make AmeriCorps possible. AmeriCorps Week shines a spotlight on AmeriCorps' impact in communities across the country in order to motivate more Americans to join AmeriCorps or volunteer in their communities. There has never been a better time to share the AmeriCorps story.

AmeriCorps Week events are happening across the country. They include statewide AmeriCorps gatherings, round tables with elected officials and community leaders, award ceremonies, "Honorary AmeriCorps Member for a Day" events with local VIPs, community service projects, recruitment fairs, and more.

This collection of AmeriCorps stories is much more than a few isolated incidents. It represents a growing movement of service that is sweeping the nation, coast to coast. These stories are the heart and soul of that movement of service.

Best,

Aaron Christian, Junior AmeriCorps Program Officer
Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives





Message from the Director:

AmeriCorps members make our communities safer, stronger, and healthier, and improve the lives of tens of millions of our most vulnerable citizens. AmeriCorps service isn't just nice: it's necessary, and its impacts are proven and measurable.

From tornadoes and hurricanes to fires and floods, AmeriCorps members have responded to hundreds of natural disasters. In response to Hurricane Katrina, more than 17,000 AmeriCorps members have provided 8.5 million hours of service and managed more than 611,000 other volunteers.

AmeriCorps members help faith-based and community groups expand services, build capacity, raise funds, develop new partnerships, and create innovative, sustainable programs.

In exchange for a year of full-time service, AmeriCorps members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (equal to the maximum Pell Grant) that helps pay for college or pay back student loans. AmeriCorps members have earned more than \$2 billion in these awards since 1994.

AmeriCorps is a powerful catalyst and force-multiplier for community volunteering. Last year AmeriCorps members recruited, trained, and supervised more than 2.6 million community volunteers for the organizations they serve. AmeriCorps members help communities tackle pressing problems. Members gain valuable professional, educational, and life benefits, and the experience has lasting impact on the members and the communities they serve.

On behalf of the Alabama Service Commission, I am please to present "Tell Your AmeriCorps Story to the World" in honor of the 2011 AmeriCorps Week. The stories contained in this book reflect the commitment to service that our AmeriCorps members embody and it is my hope that they inspire you to service as well.

Sincerely,

Jon Mason, Director
Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives



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My Service Reflection



Tell Your AmeriCorps Story

Didn't see your AmeriCorps Story? Take a minute to write it down.

AmeriCorps Signature Page

Collect Signatures *of Your Peers*



Alabama Department of Senior Services AmeriCorps

Program History:

AmeriCorps members' primary objective is to "get things done" and resolve the unmet needs of a local community. Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) successfully harnessed the energy of 25 AmeriCorps members in 2010-2011 by integrating them into its State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program. SHIP and SMP are national programs which provide free counseling and assistance to people with Medicare on their health insurance issues and Medicare fraud.

The AmeriCorps members are housed at each of the 13 Area Agencies on Aging offices across the state. They help screen and enroll beneficiaries in benefit programs that help pay for their prescription drugs and Medicare costs (Low Income Subsidy; Medicare Savings Programs). Over half of the beneficiaries live in rural areas of the state. The members focus on reaching out to these hard to reach and underserved beneficiaries. With the dedication and service of the members, Alabama SHIP has been able to increase its benefits assistance and enrollment and now ranks *fourth in the nation* for enrolling the majority of beneficiaries. Alabama SHIP has helped to enroll over 10,500 beneficiaries.

Increased demands for benefits enrollment, coupled with reduced funding levels and state hiring freezes, led ADSS to enlist AmeriCorps members. The project has allowed the SHIP and SMP local team to increase in size from 16 to 40 (including AmeriCorps members) across the state while providing these members with the opportunity to learn new skills and earn funds for their education. This opportunity enables them to enhance their skills and working knowledge of Alabama's aging issues. In addition, AmeriCorps provides the opportunity for retirees and others who are unemployed to serve, making a difference in their communities.

The AmeriCorps program has not only allowed ADSS to fulfill increasing demands, but has contributed to the state's workforce as well. The stipend that the members earn, coupled with the valuable experience they acquire throughout the service period allow them to become full-time employees of the organization they volunteered for, continue on to similar careers, or obtain a college degree.

It's a win-win situation that benefits Alabama and her citizens without costing the state a penny. The ADSS AmeriCorps project has been so successful that it was recently chosen as a national best practice model to encourage other State



him do his homework, watch TV, read, and do all sorts of things that most people take for granted. In addition, the CCTV allowed this boy to really see his eyes up close for the first time, and he was simply amazed by this. Truly, I have never seen a child be so excited about seeing his eyes. The other reason why this delivery was so special was the fact that the boy's dad and grandfather also have aniridia, and they too will be able to benefit from the equipment. This was just one of many wonderful experiences that I have had since I began my year of service with AmeriCorps. I can honestly say that I have not regretted my decision to join AmeriCorps. Not only have I gained incredible work experience, but I have really had the chance to make a difference in people's lives.

Jenny Stone: 2010-2011
Pelham, Alabama



Growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, I was fortunate enough to always have the health and vision care that I needed, so much so that I took it for granted. I realize now that healthcare is an extreme luxury to much of the population, especially those in the poorest counties of the state. Within the first two months of my AmeriCorps term at Sight Savers America in Birmingham, an organization providing follow up eye care for children in Alabama public schools, I had the opportunity to participate in a free eye clinic held in one of the Black Belt counties. After several weeks of speaking to parents on the phone and scheduling eye exams for children throughout the state, it was great to be able to meet with the families we were assisting and work first hand to help them get proper vision care. Being able to personally assist in the eye exams and see the children excited to get glasses made me realize the importance of the work AmeriCorps does. Seeing those children and talking to parents on the phone everyday makes me more appreciative of this experience and more certain of why I chose to serve with AmeriCorps. Having the opportunity to help children get the eye care they need has not only allowed me to learn more about the needs of my community but also given me invaluable life experiences that I know will last long after this year is over.

Emily Bertella: 2010-2011
Pelham, Alabama

I decided to serve with AmeriCorps because, like so many others my age, I found myself at a standstill in life. I had done all of the things one is supposed to do to “succeed in life.” I had just graduated from the University of Alabama, and was working as a waitress until I could find a job that would hopefully lead to a fulfilling career. Unfortunately, my search for a job continued for almost a year, and I began to really question what I really wanted to do in life. Then, I saw a posting for an AmeriCorps position in my hometown Birmingham, AL. I did not know much about AmeriCorps at the time, but it seemed like it would be a great opportunity for me to really make an impact. I now serve as an AmeriCorps member at Sight Savers America, which is a non-profit organization that provides low vision and blind children with assistive technology. I am a low vision services coordinator, and my duties range from setting up doctor’s appointments to training low vision children and their families on CCTVs (Closed Circuit Televisions) provided by Sight Savers America. Throughout my time in the AmeriCorps program, I have had many great experiences but one in particular really stands out. Recently, I went to Luverne, Alabama and delivered a CCTV to a nine year old boy. This boy has Aniridia, which is a condition that causes individuals to be born without an iris and this can lead to other visual impairments such as nystagmus, glaucoma, and cataracts. This delivery stands out for a couple of reasons. First of all, the child was so overjoyed to be getting this machine. He exclaimed that it would help



Units on Aging Agencies to replicate it and utilize AmeriCorps members in their aging and service programs.

Twenty-five ADSS AmeriCorps members will contribute over 33,030 hours of service to the SHIP/SMP Programs in just one year which has an estimated dollar value of \$688,675 (value = \$20.85 per hour per member).

AmeriCorps Member Stories:

Food. Clothing. Shelter. These three basic needs are the orient of most community service. One does not have to look far to find a food pantry, a clothing drive, or even a rebuilding mission. However, you seldom find the need for information—that is until I found ADSS AmeriCorps.

I am serving in my second term from Auburn, AL for Alabama Department of Senior Services’ (ADSS--Montgomery, AL). Our members work with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) Coordinators to ensure that the Medicare recipients receive accurate, unbiased, and client focused information. This counseling provides information to clients in a manner that is clear and easy to understand so that the clients are confident in their Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug plan choices.

Before being given the opportunity to serve with ADSS AmeriCorps I served in several volunteer capacities--none were as challenging as being an AmeriCorps member. I must engage my full capacity in order to keep both myself and my clients up to date on Medicare issues.

I am most grateful for a position as exciting as ADSS AmeriCorps as it is allowing me stretch towards my full potential while challenging me to connect with both older and younger Americans alike. I am also excited to have a position as versatile as to allow going from high schools to senior centers in order to bolster knowledge about AmeriCorps and its endless opportunities that keep “Getting Things Done” and working towards meeting needs both basic and beyond.

Tomekia Rush: 2009-2011
Opelika, Alabama

My time spent with AmeriCorps has been very satisfying and quite a rewarding experience. In fact, I think it has developed a strong desire in me to help others, rather than thinking only of myself. It causes one to think about how blessed we are each day. I have enjoyed helping others and putting others before myself. While working at a health fair and a poorly dressed couple



stopped at our desk for help. They were unmarried, but living together. At first glance, the lady seemed just like everyone else, but as we continued to talk to her we could see that she had several challenges. In a matter of helping them, we discovered that she could not see. She was unable to write. He did everything for her, holding her hand and showing her where to sign on the paper, hearing our conversations and keeping up with her important papers which she needed. In fact, they leaned on each other. We worked very hard helping the couple in identifying programs that are available to them through the SHIP program. And we were able to identify several programs that would be beneficial for them. It is so rewarding to see other AmeriCorps members having a strong desire to help others and going as far as possible, without losing patience, to help others with their many needs in any way possible. I have certainly grown and have more respect for others. It has been a real pleasure serving with AmeriCorps and being aware of the many ways we have helped people in need. It is quite rewarding and fulfilling serving with AmeriCorps. The knowledge I have gained is very positive. I am very proud to be of service as an AmeriCorps member.

Dorothy Snodgrass: 2010-2011
Montgomery, Alabama

I have been an Registered Nurse for over twenty years. In May of 2000, I was injured in an automobile accident which left me disabled. I felt useless and depressed. I have always been a “doer” and this situation was very hard for me.

In July of 2010, I began serving as a senior aide through the senior work program at the Area Agencies on Aging office in Mobile, Alabama. It was here that I joined AmeriCorps.

I am now a Medicare Counselor with the SHIP Program. I find the service very rewarding and I no longer feel useless. I am rewarded daily with thankful faces, kind words and sometimes praise from the people I am helping through our AmeriCorps program. My supervisor is kind and very supportive.

AmeriCorps has enabled me to feel like a responsible, useful, needed, and valuable person again. I have learned so much about Medicare and have been able to use this knowledge to not only help the seniors that call or come by, but also myself, friends and family.

I have told many of people about AmeriCorps. One friend of mine is now an AmeriCorps VISTA, after hearing how the program has helped me. I am six months into my first year and plan to return for a second year!



sibility. Sight Savers now has programs in place to help these families including mobile low vision clinics, in-home delivery of vision aids and training in how to use them - all at no cost to low income children.

Education and public awareness are also important tools Sight Savers employs to help children with poor vision. Families often are unaware their kids aren't getting the care and treatment they need, most times not out of neglect, but lack of information. Families simply don't realize that children should have their eyes examined at a very early age. Children can't articulate their vision needs, but if vision problems are caught early enough, most can be treated successfully.

Since 1996, Haddox and Sight Savers have brought renewed hope to as many children as the organization can serve. The first year that number was eleven. In 2010 alone, more than 32,000 children were served and the numbers are growing each year. As of 2010, over 150,000 children in four states have been assisted by Sight Savers America.

AmeriCorps Member Stories:

I was born to teach. When I decided to take a year off from something I was born to do and serve with AmeriCorps, I was nervous and wondering, “what was I thinking?” Before AmeriCorps, I never had the chance to learn about my service organization, Sight Savers America. Through teaching Pre-K in the state of Georgia, I was aware of the ear, eye and dental screenings that children had to receive before starting Pre-K, but there was no indication that there would be follow-up exams if recommended.

Serving at Sight Savers America has enabled follow-ups to take place for vision care. This takes place in Alabama, Mississippi, and the organization has expanded to Georgia this year! This makes me so proud to be able to experience being a part of an organization that helps children. I believe in the best education for every child. Being able to have the best possible vision is so very important to a child's education. Each time I talk with a parent who says, “Thank you so much, I would not have known my child needed glasses,” or “The teacher never noticed my child having eye problems,” it makes me know why I was chosen to serve with AmeriCorps through Sight Savers America. I am blessed to be able to encourage parents and understand the importance of eye exams and vision care for children.

Teisha Lewis: 2010-2011
Pelham, Alabama



community leaders through hands-on service opportunities. As tax season begins, I have great memories of serving as a site coordinator in my hometown of Montgomery and filing tax returns for hard-working individuals who sacrifice for their families each day. I shared stories with single mothers who talked endlessly about their child's potential and fathers who had dreams of providing great things for their children, yet experienced an unforeseen job loss. These taxpayers showed great appreciation for our service, despite their circumstances. Some couldn't understand how a young college graduate would want to spend a year (or two) serving with such little pay, but others commented on how more young people should remain committed to the communities that raised them.

I am hopeful that service continues to be a viable option for recent college graduates. I felt as if I was in a rush to graduate, go on to professional school, and become successful in my field. I've learned over the past year that one learns and retains more through valuable life experiences. I have a stronger understanding on what it means to be an engaged citizen and serve others who have not had the same opportunities. We all come from different threads, but when woven together, we create a beautiful pattern. When we learn to respect others, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and other classifications that continue to divide us, we continue to shape that pattern.

Lekisha Gunn:
Birmingham, Alabama

Sight Savers America AmeriCorps

Program History:

Sight Savers got its start back in 1996 when CEO and founder Jeff Haddox realized that poor vision was affecting tens of thousands of children in the state of Alabama each year. In his 20 plus year role as a vision scientist, Haddox knew personal stories of Alabama children who would never succeed in school, learn to read a book, see a sunset, or look into their Mother's face all because they weren't being screened, examined, and treated for vision problems. He knew many children could be corrected to 20/20 eyesight, while others with more serious low vision conditions, could maximize their sight with enhanced technological advances.

While his concerns were then and are still today with all children, Haddox's special passion is with the children of families for whom eyeglasses are a luxury item and the more sophisticated technological vision aids, a financial impos-



Thank you AmeriCorps.

Annie J Glover: 2010-2011

Mobile, Alabama

AmeriCorps has allowed me to work among some of the best, caring professionals I have ever encountered. What sets them apart is that they all have such a huge heart for serving others. Because of their influence and encouragement, I am better equipped to reach out and help others.

I have always felt that we have an obligation to all of those who have served before us to preserve our heritage of giving. As an AmeriCorps member, I am able to fulfill the calling that I have on my life while bringing hope and comfort to many others. There is nothing more rewarding than having a client thank you for making the seemingly impossible, possible. At several of our enrollment events, I have stood in awe of the genuine gratitude displayed because I knew about a resource that would help them with their Medicare. I feel each person I assisted had more of a profound effect on my life than I did theirs. There is nothing like experiencing one sweet victory at a time with them!

Who are we? We are service-oriented individuals desiring to give back to ensure the legacy of service for our country and fellow man. We are a highly motivated corps that has been given the privilege of being a small part of what has always helped make America great: the giving of oneself to others for the betterment of all. We are the pulse of underserved communities across America. We are AmeriCorps.

Who am I? I am one who is most grateful for having the opportunity to help preserve our heritage of giving. I, too, am AmeriCorps.

Linda Plylar: 2010-2011

Calera, Alabama

AmeriCorps Instructional Support Team

Program History:

The AmeriCorps Instructional Support Team (AIST) for the past fourteen years has successfully ensured a brighter future for Butler County's rural under-challenged students by focusing their effort of 20 full-time AmeriCorps members on school readiness and improving academic performance of 500 students, preschool through eighth grades. This project is a single-issue area program that develops specialization in the education-school success strategic



priority area which compliments the literacy goals of the American Reads Challenge and is aligned with No Child Left Behind instruction including the five components to literacy development.

AmeriCorps members tutor students in all public elementary schools and middle schools, in public pre-school classrooms (i.e. Bright Beginnings and First Step) and in after-school programs in both public schools and community locations. All public schools in Butler County are school-wide Title I programs. The impact of this object not only allows under-challenged students to be served, but also provides great community collaboration.

AIST provides early intervention services to pre-school children. The High Scope Assessment of readiness skills is used as an evaluation tool. Parent services include literacy training and parenting skills. These services include working with local nonprofit organizations and faith-based groups to improve the quality of personal, family, and community life. The program also provides in school tutoring and afterschool literacy activities.

This program is known on a national level. Former CEO of Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), Harris Wofford recognized AIST in the Congressional Record at a Senate Subcommittee about the success of AIST in improving academic progress of 250 rural at risk students. Innovations in Civic Participation selected AIST as one of 51 most innovative AmeriCorps programs in the United States (2006). CNCS highlighted AIST as a promising program in October 2004 issue of National Service News. The Alabama Community Service Education Association honored AIST as an Outstanding Benefactor for exemplary service and significant contribution benefitting the many facets of Community Education throughout Butler County.

AmeriCorps Member Stories:

My AmeriCorps experience has guided me personally by keeping me focused on the education of younger children. The experience has also given me more self-pride and reinforced my convictions in life. I am proud to be an AIST member, because I now know what it takes to teach and I know that we truly can make a difference in the education of youth. My experience in AmeriCorps has brought me closer to my goal of becoming a school counselor.

Elethiana Hart-Mobley: 1998-2000 Greenville, Alabama

I was looking for a fresh start with AmeriCorps, but I received so much more. I got a chance to make a difference in the life of a child and see possibilities instead of limitations. I will remember the children forever. They have touched



AmeriCorps Member Stories:

Serving in the FocusFirst scheduling office, you occasionally get the chance to speak with preschool directors weeks after the vision screening ended. What I received from one of these calls was much more than the mailing address we needed.

The director on the phone told me how wonderful it was that we came and how a few of the children had already been to the doctor and gotten glasses. But that was just the beginning of the good news she wanted to share with me. The director further explained that one little boy in particular had gone to the eye doctor and since he has been wearing his glasses the teachers had noticed significant behavioral improvements.

In the past, this child was irritable, difficult to manage in the classroom, and did not play well with the other children. Now that this child has been wearing his glasses, he is interacting well with the other children, following directions well, and overall is much more engaged and playful.

This child may have been on the path to becoming labeled as the “bully” or the “problem student.” Such labels could have followed this toddler for years, contributing to educational and relational delays as well as self-esteem difficulties.

Knowing AmeriCorps has helped this one child gain more than glasses, but a new chance at friendships and the confidence that comes with success in the classroom has been a reminder to me of the many ways we intentionally and unintentionally Impact Alabama through AmeriCorps.

Julia Hargett Madrid: 2010-2011 Birmingham, Alabama

When I decided to defer law school for a year of service with AmeriCorps, I had no idea that I would continue my AmeriCorps service for a second year. Serving as an AmeriCorps member for a year and a half has defined my career and personal goals. My mother and grandmother, my two biggest inspirations, were born and raised in rural, segregated Alabama. They both valued education and service to community and instilled those values in me as a young child. When I traveled to the Black Belt to conduct free vision screenings, I witnessed the poverty that lingers and remembered their sacrifice to afford me a life of opportunity.

Impact Alabama remains a unique organization in that recent college graduates are given the great responsibility of actively engaging college students and



housing assistance, job search assistance, and legal services.

I had the pleasure of meeting a young man named Joel at this event. Joel was living in a rehabilitation center and had been having a hard time affording a haircut and other things that were essential to him being able to find a job and get out on his own. Through this event, Joel was able to get an ID card, apply for a duplicate social security card, get a haircut, and a medical screening.

It was inspiration for me because I was able to help build self-worth in a young man who thought he wasn't worth anything at all.

Tiara Clinton: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

Impact Alabama AmeriCorps State

Program History:

Impact Alabama: A Student Service Initiative was incorporated in June 2004 and has been involved in direct service to the community since August 2004. Impact is Alabama's first nonprofit dedicated to developing and implementing substantive service-learning projects in coordination with more than twenty universities and colleges throughout the state. Impact presents a vision of Alabama in which its young citizens understand, appreciate, and engage actively in civic and public life—contributing their diverse talents to solve local and state problems, influence public policy, and pursue the common good. Impact has two main objectives: 1) Engage students in addressing human and community needs within structured service opportunities designed intentionally to promote student learning and leadership development; 2) Enhance students' senses of social and political responsibility, as well as their sense of ability to affect systemic change.

In order to meet these objectives, Impact has developed four signature initiatives –FocusFirst, SaveFirst, SpeakFirst, and CollegeFirst – aimed at assisting low-income individuals and families in a variety of areas from tax preparation and financial literacy to pre-K vision care to debate and college preparation. Impact has seen tremendous growth over the course of its six year history. Beginning with a staff of four in 2004 and a volunteer base of about 200 students, Impact's projects are now administered by a team of thirty staff members with more than 650 volunteers each year. Over the course of Impact's history, we have developed strong partnerships with twenty-three colleges and universities throughout the state.



my life and my heart. AmeriCorps gave me the opportunity to provide encouragement and hope for the future.

Wendy Layton: 1999-2000
Greenville, Alabama

If you love the children let me hear you shout
1, 2, 3, 4
I walk so much sometimes by feet are sore
A, B, C, D
I would be a member for three years if they would let me
All in all I've enjoyed my test
AmeriCorps is the BEST.

Jacquie Hamilton: 2008-2009
Greenville, Alabama

I assist two teachers at Georgiana School. It is a joy to watch the teachers because they are always challenging students to do their best. It's a reward for me to see them accomplish their task by the look on their faces, knowing I contributed in some small way. I came from a dysfunctional family and because of that I can see the challenge for some of the students. If we would look a bit deeper, we could tell that these children are hurting for attention and much more. I can see these challenges on their faces as they walk into the classroom in the morning. I can see it in the clothes they wear, I can sense it in the smells they bring with them. I can hear it in the way they express themselves. I just know there is something deeper. I am always asking myself, what can I do or what can I say that will make a difference in the lives of these children? I have never been in this type of setting before, but it is pure joy being in the presence of these students, knowing the challenges and I want to continue my AmeriCorps experience. The students are teaching me to take my eyes off me and to realize there are things much bigger than myself.

J. C. Lewis: 2009-2010
Greenville, Alabama

I would like to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH for my two years in the AmeriCorps Program. I have had a wonderful experience and so much fun working with the kids. I'm going to miss all of them, especially those I've been helping for the past 2 years-they have learned so much. I am so proud of the AmeriCorps program, it's a BIG help for the school system. W. O. Parmer School gave us a surprise lunch and lots of sweet stuff. Some teachers gave me goody bags and surprises and "We will Miss you Mrs. Joy" card with all the



students signatures. Good Luck to the new AmeriCorps members. Hope they have wonderful years.

Joy Matthews: 2008-2010
Greenville, Alabama

Building Communities, Bettering Lives

Program History:

The YWCA Central Alabama is pleased to host AmeriCorps members for year two of Building Communities, Bettering Lives. This year, the YWCA's program has grown from five members to 16 members.

Each position is designed to further the work of the YWCA and its partnering organizations in domestic violence prevention, economic development, education, housing and social justice. In addition to the primary placement, all members will contribute to a variety of assignments.

AmeriCorps Member Stories:

Through my time of service for with AmeriCorps, I have grown professionally and personally. I have grown professionally first in the aspect of catering to multiple needs directed from several individuals and balancing the expectations of those different individuals. Second I have grown in my ability to be assertive while maintaining positive, respectful relationships. I have grown personally by seeing first hand on a daily basis what good an organization can do in the lives of others, and also how I contribute to that good. I will take this experience on to the next step in my career.

Megan Logan: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

My site placement is at Pathways, a homeless shelter for women and children in downtown Birmingham. This is my first year of service with AmeriCorps and it has provided me with more professional experience than I ever imagined. After completing my bachelor's degree and returning back to my hometown of Birmingham, the job market was bleak. The AmeriCorps program has allowed me to explore my diverse interests in the non-profit community and devote hours of service towards combating homelessness. Serving as an AmeriCorps member has allowed me to build upon my strengths and improve upon my weaknesses. On a daily basis, I receive and return phone calls from individuals, churches, corporations, and other groups regarding volunteer



GYAC members currently provide services to over 500 youth in the Greater Birmingham area. Corps members provide mentoring and homework help to youth, while working to increase volunteerism, leadership and civic engagement. They also offer support for partner organizations such as Better Basics, NorthStar Youth Ministries, Birmingham Regional Economic and Development Center, Grace House and Norwood Resource Center.

The GYAC believes that there is no such thing as “tomorrow’s leaders”—youth can lead TODAY!

AmeriCorps Member Stories:

Recent tornadoes have ravaged the American South, especially Alabama. The death toll in the state is currently nearly 250 and continues to rise daily. Thousands have their homes and hundreds of thousands are without power. Tornado relief centers are set up all across the South. So many people have made donations and contributed to the relief effort. While working at a donation center at Scott School in Pratt City, an area hit hard by the tornadoes, I had the opportunity to pass out donated women's clothing. The women were allowed to get as many items as they liked. I could not imagine how those women felt having lost most or everything they owned. The words and actions of many of the women were heartbreaking, but yet amazing.

As I helped one woman find clothes her size, she told me she had to laugh to keep from crying. I could tell many were not accustomed to asking others for help or receiving donated goods. Many were saying “thank you” continuously to the volunteers. The most impactful situation was when I asked some of the women to pick out more clothing and they declined saying that they wanted to leave enough for others. These women had lost nearly everything and were still thinking about the welfare others! Instead of being bitter with the world and only looking out for themselves, they remained thoughtful and concerned for the well-being of others. I am truly inspired by the efforts of the community and admire the resilience and thoughtfulness of the women I met. Without AmeriCorps, this opportunity would not have been afforded to me and I'm grateful for the chance to make a difference.

Larezia Williams: 2009—2010
Birmingham, Alabama

On Saturday March 9, 2011, approximately 1,500 volunteers helped those who were homeless, or those who are near homeless to get services they'd been unable to obtain otherwise. These services included health, vision, and dental screenings, grooming services, driver's licenses and social security cards,



perfect opportunity for me to gain experience and learn if social work was the right fit for me. I have been serving in the YW's rural domestic violence shelter in Pell City, Alabama, since September 2010. When I first walked into the shelter I had no idea what to expect, but I have learned so much over the past few months, not only about the complexities of domestic violence, but also how my strengths fit in with this line of work.

I love the challenge of empowering the women we serve to discover their own potential through providing individual support and case management. Because I am not a caseworker, my daily contact with clients is informal, but I feel that my ability to foster relationships with people in a way that is deliberate, but also respectful and sensitive, has been beneficial in helping the women succeed. Although a lot of times, progress is slow, it is awesome to see their confidence grow with every milestone, from something as small as getting a new haircut to something as big as landing a new job.

I also facilitate a dating abuse prevention program in high schools and middle schools, where I not only have the opportunity to educate the students on how to keep themselves safe, but I also have a chance to hear their views on the issue. I am constantly amazed at how casually some students talk about the different types of abuse as if it is something normal. I was aware that dating violence was an issue for teenagers before facilitating this program, but being able to see the effects first-hand has inspired me to become more active in educating and advocating for the prevention of this teen dating violence. I am so thankful for this year of service with AmeriCorps, and the impact it will have on the rest of my career.

Julia Sanford: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

Gulfsouth Youth Action Corps—Birmingham

Program History:

Operation REACH, Inc is a non-profit community education resource that develops programs for youth and families that create opportunities and transforms lives. Our flagship program- The Gulfsouth Youth Action Corps (GYAC) is dedicated to engaging, empowering and inspiring community focused youth leadership in the American South. The GYAC seeks to demonstrate and build the power of youth leadership to change communities by developing cadres of young leaders and philanthropists, so that no one will ask where are next generation of civic leaders will come from.



opportunities. I provide tours of the facilities to groups and maintain effective communications with agency volunteers. I record all monetary deposits in the deposit log and send thank you letter to all donors. On a regular basis, I attend local agency fairs in order to recruit volunteers for and enhance community awareness of Pathways and its programs. I assist with social media tools and occasionally take photographs of agency events. Serving at Pathways has allowed me to tap into my artistic side since I am responsible for working with administrative staff to develop creative ways to promote Pathways through new materials. My service through the AmeriCorps has improved my communication skills, my ability to function as part of a team, and my ability to prioritize tasks. This experience is irreplaceable because it has allowed me to volunteer for causes I am passionate about while gaining professional skills that I otherwise would not had the opportunity to obtain.

Lane Turbeville: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

I am an Americorps Member serving with the Domestic Violence Department by disseminating dating violence prevention education to middle schools and high schools in Jefferson and St. Clair counties.

Teaching dating violence prevention has granted me the opportunity to empower youth to make healthy choices when it comes to dating partners. It is so rewarding to hear reports about teens that we have spoken to whose lives have been impacted because of the information we have provided to them. Other notable moments include times when a student has initiated a one-on-one conversation with us after class because the information shared that day hit home for her or him.

In addition to the fulfillment I receive by teaching the Healthy Relationships curriculum, I have benefited from my service in numerous other ways. First, I work with an amazing organization with a mission to empower women and eliminate racism—two areas I am passionate about. Second, I have received a wide range of leadership training that will not only affect my professional development but has already had an impact on my personal development. Third, I have been fortunate to have supervisors who are passionate about bettering the community and who serve as wonderful role models. I can go on and on about team building opportunities and cross training I have received, but I think my point has been made: my Americorps service experience to date has been outstanding!

Hazina Dorius: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama



During my time as an AmeriCorps member I have faced some challenges. But along with those challenges came growth, a greater sense of self and the capabilities I possess, increased leadership skills, camaraderie, and memories that will last for years to come.

This experience has definitely taught me that facing challenges rather than avoiding them builds strength and character. I now make stronger efforts not to complain about the different situations in which I find myself simply because I see the struggles of the people I've been assigned to help everyday. I am reminded that I should be grateful. And I am, in fact, grateful. I'm grateful to have an education, grateful to have food, clothing, and shelter, grateful to have people in my life who care about me, grateful for my health and strength and I'm grateful for many of the things we all tend to take for granted.

Mostly, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and be a part of the AmeriCorps program. Helping people change their lives has been a truly enriching and rewarding experience. I'm sure all AmeriCorps members have their own set of challenges they have to overcome. But no matter how great the challenge may be, the reward is greater and the entire community reaps the benefits. I see the value in the work performed by all the members of AmeriCorps. What we do matters and my hope is that the people in our local, national, and international communities can see that as well.

Crystal Caldwell: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

Through AmeriCorps I have had the opportunity to use the things I studied in college, African American studies and Sociology, and really get into my interest of equality for all. I focus on social justice work through the Heritage Panel program and Camp Anytown Alabama. I am a recent college graduate and I have gained so much experience. I am from Toledo, Ohio so deciding to take this next step was a big move but I am so glad I took it now. I have developed numerous skills of mine like facilitating, writing, and communication. I have also really been able to grow through the setting of having real responsibilities with great training to prepare. My supervisor has been especially helpful in meeting all my expectations, being a mentor, and making sure I'm improving all the time. Serving through AmeriCorps has been the perfect next step for me out of college.

Holly Jackson: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama



Growing up in a single parent home in Birmingham, AL, I learned the importance of education and giving back. Now as a young adult, it is time to start putting what my mother taught me to use. This is one of the reasons I choose to serve in AmeriCorps. Today I now have the pleasure to work with a wonderful group of kids in the YWCA of Central Alabama's After-School Enrichment Program for the homeless. I benefit daily from the brilliant minds of kids that have endured so much in their short time here in the world. I am now considering teaching because working with kids provides me with so much joy. I benefit from the strength of the people I serve, because they do not allow home situations to affect their childhood. I am learning how to plan daily activities and how to balance my time. Most importantly, I am learning how to interact with people that come from different backgrounds. My service place has really broadened my horizons. I am truly grateful to be an active member of AmeriCorps and even more grateful for having the opportunity to serve such outstanding kids. Once my year of service is completed, I am looking forward to a teaching career and spending time volunteering with the ASEP program.

Darriel King: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

My journey began September 1, 2010 providing services to the Community of Woodlawn. I serve as the Woodlawn Housing Assistant with the responsibilities of providing residential support on behalf of and for resident individuals and families living in YWCA Woodlawn housing, ensuring the smooth operation of all facilities in a way that provides exceptional tenant services for residents while achieving the highest standards of compliance.

AmeriCorps has afforded me the opportunity to help individuals and families as they travel along their paths. Doing this, I assist them with identifying their strengths and areas of needs in order to help them reach their potential. I benefit from the day to day encounters with the diverse populations through the healthy changes I observe. I am learning to gain an open perspective on presented situations relating to homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, and single families, which allows me to improve my critical thinking and communication skills. The individuals and families I help are contributing to the growth in my life as I reflect on the situations and apply confidence as I work with indirect supervision on projects.

Shiovhon White: 2010-2011
Birmingham, Alabama

When I decided to pursue a career in social work, I knew I needed experience first. The YWCA Central Alabama's AmeriCorps program turned out to be the

